

In Loving Memory

Sister M. Christa Rein, SSND



Birth
April 17, 1925

Baptism
April 26, 1925

Profession
July 19, 1949

Death
September 26, 2012

Burial
Our Lady of Good
Counsel Cemetery
Mankato, Minnesota

*Precious and blessed is
the death of the faithful
before God... for
they die in union with
their dear Jesus, in the
grace of God, in peace.*

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

Sister M. Christa Rein, 87, died Wednesday, September 26, 2012, in Notre Dame Health Care Center, Our Lady of Good Counsel Campus, Mankato, Minnesota. She had participated in Notre Dame Hall activities the previous week, but her condition declined rapidly in the days preceding her death.

Sister Christa, the ninth of 12 children, was born April 17, 1925, in Shakopee, Minnesota, and baptized Elizabeth Ann at St. Mark's Church on April 26. Known to family and friends as Betty Ann, she attended St. Mark's School for grades one through eight. In her autobiography Sister Christa wrote, "Sisters attracted me from my first entrance into grade school; however, when I completed eighth grade, that was the last thing I'd ever be." She continued, "In my senior year, my mother died. Just the week before she became sick, I began to attend daily Holy Mass and receive Holy Communion. When Mom got to heaven two weeks later, she must have pleaded with Our Lord to choose one of his daughters for His own, because after her death I made daily Mass and Holy Communion a 'must.'"

Following her graduation from Shakopee High School in 1943, Betty Ann took an office position, which she held for three years. Becoming more and more dissatisfied with her life, she "began praying for three things – a new job, a good young man, or a religious vocation." Later she added, "But please let me be a sister." The consideration of a religious vocation intensified during a Forty Hours Devotion in 1946. She wrote, "I knew God did want me but all I could do was to think of ways to get out of it. I thought it was just impossible to leave all. During those next weeks, every sermon seemed to be directed toward me. ... I gave in and I'm thankful to God for being so patient in waiting for me." That fall, Betty Ann entered the candidature. She was received into the novitiate in 1948 and given the name Sister M. Christa, which was derived from the name of both her father and brother.

Sister Christa professed her first vows on July 19, 1949. Her first teaching assignment was fourth grade at St. Francis de Sales School, St. Paul, where she stayed for one year. She then moved to St. Leo Catechetical School in Pipestone, Minnesota. In 1954, Sister Christa was transferred to Sacred Heart School, St. Paul, where she taught primary grades. Sister Christa remained at Sacred Heart until 1963. During this time, she earned her BS degree in elementary education, graduating from Mount Mary College in 1959.

In 1963, Sister Christa moved to Bismarck, North Dakota, where she taught primary grades at St. Anne's School until 1966 when, in addition to teaching primary grades, she was asked to serve as principal at SS. Peter & Paul School, Loretto, Minnesota. Giving ample evidence of her school leadership qualities, she continued in the somewhat unusual arrangement of primary-grade teacher/principal for 10 years, endearing herself to her students, their families and the parishioners, who appreciated her dedication to SS. Peter & Paul. In her own way, she helped implement the liturgical changes of Vatican Council II by encouraging older students to learn how to play guitar

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so that they could help lead the music at school and parish liturgies. During this time, sisters changed from their long habits to contemporary dress, and Sister Christa often told the story of one of her student's reaction: "You've got new shoes!"

Following one year of teaching at St. Joseph School, Red Wing (1976-77), Sister Christa resumed her role of primary teacher/principal at St. Bernard School, Cologne. Continuing the pattern that she had established in Loretto, she fully immersed herself into school and parish life in Cologne. As educational techniques expanded to include the use of computers, she made sure that computers were part of the educational program at St. Bernard. She continued to encourage student musicians. Sister Christa remained at St. Bernard for 24 years, and during that time, one of her former second graders joined the faculty. Her family, too, was very important to her, and she appreciated being near her hometown of Shakopee. When Sister Christa retired in 2001, St. Bernard's parishioners offered many tributes, including a letter published in the archdiocesan paper, *The Catholic Spirit*, which read in part, "Our beloved Sister Christa Rein, SSND is retiring after more than 24 years as principal at St. Bernard School in Cologne. She has been a School Sister of Notre Dame for more than 50 years, and we were lucky enough to have her at St. Bernard's for almost half of these years. Sister has been principal, teacher, secretary, janitor, fundraiser, nurse, friend and confidante. ... Retiring as principal will not be easy for her as she loves the kids and her job, but it sure is well deserved."

In her retirement years at Good Counsel, Sister Christa gave community service in a variety of ways until memory impairment restricted her involvement. Throughout her life as a School Sister of Notre Dame, she was appreciated by friends and colleagues for her commitment to her vocation, her dedication to her ministry – and – her wry sense of humor.

Sister Christa's funeral Mass, with Father Bernard Steiner as presider, was held Monday, October 1, in Good Counsel Chapel. She is survived by her sisters Jean Rein, Joan Monnens, and Evelyn (Lester) Menden, two sisters-in-law Lucy and Verna, and nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, Christian and Anna (Neuzil) Rein, her brothers Joseph, Carl, Christian, Francis, Jerome and Jim and her sisters Marie Rein and Esther Johnson.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND